

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KINSHA 01494 01 OF 02 201145Z

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01

EUR-08 EA-06 MC-01 EB-03 CIAE-00 /048 W

----- 111087

R 200958Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1388

SECDEF WASHDC/ASA/DSAA(ISA)

CSA DAMO - Z/SS/TC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KINSHASA 1494

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MCAP, MASS,CG

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT MOBUTU AND ZAIRE'S DEFENSE PROBLEMS

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MOBUTU RECEIVED GEN. ROCKWELL, MTAT, AND MYSELF FEB 19. HE WAS EXTREMELY FRIENDLY. HIS THEME WAS FUNDAMENTAL NEED TO IMPROVE ZAIRE'S "DETERRENT," HE REVIEWED HISTORY OF PAST CLOSE US-ZAIRE MILITARY RELATIONS WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS HAVING DETERIORATED IN PAST FOUR OR FIVE YEARS. DUE TO US DISINTEREST AND LACK COMPREHENSION HIS DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS. HE ALSO PROVIDED "THREAT ASSESSMENT" IN POLITICAL TERMS AT LEAST. HE CONCLUDED THAT GEN. ROCKWELL HAD CRITICAL OPPORTUNITY TO IMPRESS WASHINGTON WITH NEED REESTABLISH CLOSE US-ZAIRE MILITARY COLLABORATION. END SUMMARY.

1. PATTERN OF CONVERSATION: PRESIDENT MOBUTU WITH GENERALS MOLONGYA, KATSUVA, AND COL. MUTONO RECEIVED GENERAL ROCKWELL, OTHER MEMBERS OF THE MTAT TEAM, AND MYSELF 19 FEB FOR ABOUT FIFTY MINUTES. HE WAS EXTREMELY FRIENDLY AND HIS USUAL SMILING CONFIDENT SELF. AFTER INTRODUCTION, HE BEGAN BY SAYING HE WAS ONLY CHIEF OF STATE IN AFRICA WHO DID NOT LIVE IN A PALACE. HE TALKED AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT HISTORY OF HIS OFFICE BUILDING AND OF HIS RESIDENCE AND OF HOW
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 KINSHA 01494 01 OF 02 201145Z

HE HAD DECLINED TO LIVE EITHER IN FORMER BELGIAN

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S RESIDENCE OR IN "PALAIS DE LA NATION" WHICH HE HAD TURNED OVER TO PARLIAMENT. HE THEN DELIVERED LONG STATEMENT ON ZAIRE'S DEFENSE PROBLEMS, HIS HOPES FOR CLOSER US-ZAIRE MILITARY RELATIONS. STATEMENT WAS TRANSLATED AT HIS REQUEST BY ZAIROIS OFFICER WHOSE TRANSLATION BORE NO RESEMBLANCE TO PRESIDENT'S REMARKS. GENERAL ROCKWELL REPLIED AND I TRANSLATED. WE ROSE TO LEAVE AND THEN MOBUTU SAT US ALL DOWN AGAIN AND HAD ANOTHER SHOT AT ZAIRE'S PROBLEMS, WITH ME TRANSLATING.

2. FIRST MOBUTU STATEMENT: PRESIDENT TOOK US THROUGH HISTORY AS HE SAW IT OF US-ZAIRIAN MILITARY RELATIONS. FROM 1960 TO FOUR OR FIVE YEARS AGO THERE HAD BEEN, HE SAID, INTIMATE MILITARY COLLABORATION. THROUGHOUT PERIOD OF SECESSION AND REBELLIONS, US SUPPORT HAD BEEN SUPERB AND HE WOULD FOREVER BE GRATEFUL. IN 1963 PRESIDENT KENNEDY RECEIVED HIM AND HE HAD HIS FIRST TOUR OF AMERICAN MILITARY INSTALLATIONS WHICH LEFT A LASTING FAVORABLE IMPRESSION ON HIM. IN 1970, AT MOBUTU'S INSISTENCE, PRESIDENT NIXON HAD AUTHORIZED FURTHER TOUR OF AMERICAN MILITARY INSTALLATIONS. MOBUTU MENTIONED VISITS TO BRAGG, BENNING, ANNAPOLIS, FORT MONROE, SAN DIEGO, AND NUMEROUS GENERAL OFFICER FRIENDS. FOR YEARS AFTER HE FIRST MET GENERAL ADAMS, EACH STRIKE COMMAND COMMANDER HAD EACH YEAR VISITED ZAIRE. THIS HAD CONTINUED UNTIL ABOUT FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN THIS CLOSE AND WELCOME RELATIONSHIP WAS INEXPLICABLY DROPPED BY US. GENERAL ROCKWELL, HE SAID, COULD CONTRIBUTE TO MAINTAINING US-ZAIRIAN FRIENDSHIP AND TO REINSTATING CLOSE MILITARY PARTNERSHIP.

3. MOBUTU POINTED OUT THAT ZAIRE IS LARGE COUNTRY AND, AS GENERAL HAD SEEN, WITH AN INADEQUATE DEFENSE FORCE. ZAIRE HAD "NO INTENTION OF ATTACKING ANYONE OR ANNEXING ANYTHING." ZAIRE NEEDED A "DETERRENT FORCE." FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WAS GENERAL AMIN IN UGANDA. MOBUTU WAS NOT AFRAID OF GENERAL AMIN BUT AMIN WAS SUPPLIED BY THE SOVIETS, ALLEGEDLY TO BALANCE CHINESE ARMS IN TANZANIA, AND A UGANDAN TANK STRIKE INTO EASTERN ZAIRE COULD NOT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KINSHA 01494 01 OF 02 201145Z

BE RULED OUT. IF AMIN MOVED INTO EASTERN ZAIRE, IT WOULD TAKE A MAJOR EFFORT TO DISLEDGE HIM. CLEARLY IT WOULD BE MUCH BETTER FOR ZAIRE TO HAVE A DEFENSIVE CAPACITY THAT WOULD DETER AMIN AND ANYONE ELSE WHO MIGHT THINK OF ATTACKING ZAIRE.

4. MOBUTU SAID HE HAD REPEATEDLY EXPLAINED TO HIS AMERICAN FRIENDS HIS DEFENSE NEEDS, ONLY TO BE MET WITH DELAY

AND LACK OF UNDERSTANDING. FOR THREE YEARS, FROM 1967 TO 1970, HE HAD TRIED TO BUY C-130'S. IT HAD TAKEN PRESIDENT NIXON'S PERSONAL INTERVENTION TO BRING THE DEFENSE AND STATE DEPARTMENTS TO AGREE TO THIS. HE NOW HAD FIVE C-130'S, ONE HAVING CRASHED, NOT WHILE FULFILLING A MILITARY MISSION BUT WHILE MAKING A CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY BY CARRYING CIVILIAN GOODS. FIVE C-130'S IN A COUNTRY ZAIRE'S SIZE WAS RIDICULOUS. HE NEEDED AT LEAST TWELVE BUT THE US WOULD NOT COOPERATE. (TODAY WAS NOT THE DAY TO REMIND HIM THAT THE CONTRACTS FOR SIX C-130'S HAVE BEEN READY FOR SIGNATURE FOR MONTHS AND THAT IF HE WEREN'T BROKE, HE COULD HAVE THEM.) IF NEW C-30'S WERE NOT AVILABLE, HE SAID, PERHAPS USED C-130'S COULD BE SUPPLIED.

5. MOBUTU SAID HE HAD BEGUN DISCUSSING HIS TANK NEEDS WITH AMBASSADOR VANCE SEVERAL YEARS AGO AND NOTHING HAD COME OF IT. WHEN HE HAD BEEN IN CHINA AND HAD MENTIONED TANKS, HE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THEY COULD BE DELIVERED WITHIN A MATTER OF MONTHS. HE WAS GRATEFUL THAT THEY WERE COMING, EVEN THOUGH HE DIDN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE QUALITY OF CHINESE TANKS. HE WAS NOT PRO-CHINA. HE WAS NOT PRO-NORTH KOREA. HE WAS PRO-ZAIRE. ZAIRE HAD NEEDS AND IF HIS OLD FRIENDS WOULD NOT HELP, HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO TURN ELSEWHERE.

6. IT WAS THE SAME STORY WITH FIGHTER AIRCRAFT. THE US HAD TALKED ABOUT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HAD SAID THAT FIGHTERS WERE TOO EXPENSIVE AND IN ANY CASE NOT NEEDED IN ZAIRE, SO HE HAD BOUGHT MIRAGES. THE US HAD FAILED TO UNDERSTAND HIS PROBLEM, BUT THE FRENCH HAD UNDERSTOOD.

7. MOBUTU HOPED GENERAL ROCKWELL WOULD RETURN TO
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 KINSHA 01494 01 OF 02 201145Z

WASHINGTON WITH AN APPRECIATION OF ZAIRE'S NEEDS AND THAT HE WOULD SUCCEED IN GETTING ACTION FROM US POLICY MAKERS TO SUPPLY NEEDED ARMS FOR ZAIRE. TELL WASHINGTON, HE SAID, ABOUT ZAIRE'S NEEDS. TELL WASHINGTON ABOUT MY

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 KINSHA 01494 02 OF 02 201112Z

15

ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01

EUR-08 EA-06 MC-01 EB-03 CIAE-00 /048 W

----- 110677

R 200958Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1389

SECDEF WASHDC/ASA/DSAA(ISA)

CSA DAMO - Z/SS/TC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KINSHASA 1494

FRIENDSHIP FOR THE UNITED STATES. TELL WASHINGTON
ABOUT MY PREFERENCE FOR MILITARY COOPERATION WITH
THE UNITED STATES.

8. AT THIS POINT GENERAL ROCKWELL MADE SHORT STATEMENT
IN REPLY. HE EXPRESSED GREAT APPRECIATION FOR TEAM'S
RECEPTION AND PARTICULAR THANKS TO GENERAL KATSUVA WHO
HAD SHOWN UNFAILING HOSPITALITY ON THEIR IMPRESSIVE
TOUR OF ZAIRE. HE HAD COLLECTED NEEDED INFORMATION.
HE AND HIS TEAM WOULD RETURN TO WASHINGTON AND PREPARE
REPORT FOR REVIEW BY JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND SECRETARIS
OF STATE AND DEFENSE. HE WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT
PROMPTLY TO GET TO PRESIDENT MOBUTU AND HIS ZAIRIAN
MILITARY FRIENDS A USEFUL REPORT FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION.
HE REMARKED THAT HE HAD BEEN STRUCK BY FACT THAT IN EAST
FOOD SUPPLIES WERE READILY AVAILABLE, BUT THAT CONTRARY
TO SITUATION IN US WHERE WE MOVED MOST GOODS BY TRUCK
OR RAIL, THESE FOOD RESERVES COULD NOT GET TO MARKETS
IN MAJOR CITIES EXCEPT BY AIR. HE SAID HE WOULD RETURN
TO WASHINGTON AS AN AMBASSADOR OF ZAIRE (PRESIDENT
INTERJECTED TO SAY HE SHOULD TAKE OFF HIS TIE AND PUT ON
A LEOPARDSKIN CAP), AND WITH LASTING APPRECIATION FOR
COURTESIES SHOWN HIM AND THE TEAM. ON BEHALF US HE WISHED
TO PRESENT PRESIDENT MOBUTU WITH A SOUVENIR GIFT.
EVERYONE STOOD, GIFT WAS PRESENTED, THANKS EXPRESSED,
AND AS WE MOVED TO DOOR, PRESIDENT ASKED US TO SIT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 KINSHA 01494 02 OF 02 201112Z

DOWN. AS MOBUTU LEANED FORWARD TO EMPHASIZE HIS POINTS,
GENERAL MOLONGYA ASKED ME TO TRANSLATE, APPARENTLY
RELAIZING THE INADEQUACIES OF EARLIER EFFORT.

9. SECOND MOBUTU STATEMENT: PRESIDENT SAID THAT

ZAIRIAN SECURITY WAS HIS FUNDAMENTAL CONCERN. ZAIRE HAD NINE THOUSAND KILOMETER FRONTIER AND WAS SURROUNDED BY NINE COUNTRIES AND ONE ENCLAVE WHICH, IF IT BECAME INDEPENDENT, WOULD MAKE TEN COUNTRIES BORDERING ZAIRE, EACH OF WHICH HAD ITS OWN POLICIES. THERE WERE FOUR FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES - THE CONGO, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS SOCIALIST-MOSCOW-ORIENTED; THE CAR, WHICH WAS SOMETIMES LEFT, SOMETIMES RIGHT, AND HARD TO SAY EXACTLY WHERE IT WAS TODAY; RWANDA, WHICH WAS ESSENTIALLY NEUTRAL; AND BURUNDI, WHICH WAS ESSENTIALLY SOCIALIST. THERE WERE THREE ANGOLOPHONE COUNTRIES - UGANDA, TIED TO THE SOVIETS, HE HAD ALREADY DISCUSSED; TANZANIA, WITH STRONG SOCIALIST TENDENCIES AND UNDER CHINESE INFLUENCE; ZAMBIA, WHICH WAVERED AND WAS HARD TO PREDICT FROM DAY TO DAY, BUT MORE OFTEN THAN NOT INFLUENCED BY TANZANIA AND THE CHINESE, AND WITH A BASIC SOCIALIST TENDENCY. ANGOLA WAS LUSOPHONE. THERE WERE THREE GROUPS CONTENDING FOR POWER. THE FNLA, LED BY HOLDEN ROBERTO, WAS ZAIRE'S FRIEND. THE MPLA, LED BY NETO, WAS IN THE SOVIET CAMP. UNITA, LED BY DR. SAVIMBI, WAS "PRO-PORTUGUESE, PRO-FRENCH AND A LITTLE PRO-EVERYBODY." THE SUDAN WAS ARABOPHONE AND A MEMBER OF THE ARAB LEAGUE.

10. ZAIRE WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL THIS. "HOW WOULD SAUCE FOR THIS STEW BE CONCOCTED?" HE ASKED. HE THREW UP HIS HANDS AND SAID, "WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? I GET SICK THINKING ABOUT IT." ZAIRE'S DEFENSE PROBLEMS AROSE FROM THEIR NEIGHBORS. THIS WAS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE AMERICAN POSITION. THE US HAD GLOBAL MILITARY PROBLEMS, BUT NO SECURITY PROBLEMS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. TRUE, CUBA WAS A HOSTILE ISLAND BUT IT POSED NO REAL THREAT. CANADA WAS A FRIEND AND A NATO ALLY. THERE WERE NO MILITARY PROBLEMS WITH MEXICO. ZAIRE, ON THE CONTRARY, WAS SURROUNDED AND HAD TO BE IN POSITION TO DEAL WITH TROUBLE FROM WHEREVER IT MIGHT COME. GENERAL ROCKWELL COULD MAKE REAL CONTRIBUTION IF HE COULD BRING

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KINSHA 01494 02 OF 02 201112Z

THE US TO RECOGNIZE THESE REALITIES AND TO RESPOND AS IN THE PAST.

11. WITH THAT AND SOME CASUAL CHITCHAT ABOUT THE GENERAL'S COMBAT INFANTRYMAN'S BADGE AND PARACHUTE BADGE, DURING WHICH MOBUTU SAID HE WAS NOT ONLY A PARACHUTIST HIMSELF BUT "THE CREATOR" OF THE ZAIROIS AIRBORNE FORCES, WE TOOK OUR LEAVE.

12. GENERAL ROCKWELL CONCURS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE, MILITARY CAPABILITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975KINSHA01494
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750060-0863
From: KINSHASA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750228/aaaaazaf.tel
Line Count: 276
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <17 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT MOBUTU AND ZAIRE'S DEFENSE PROBLEMS SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MOBUTU RECEIVED GEN. ROCKWELL, MTAT
TAGS: MCAP, MASS, CG, US, (MOBUTU SESE SEKO), (ROCKWELL, JOHN)
To: STATE CSA DAMO Z SS TC DOD
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006